

Fasting: A Useful Common Term for Unification of Mankind, Globalization and Inter-faith Dialogue

* Dr. Shahzād Iqbāl Shām

ABSTRACT:

Ramadan, the fasting month in Islamic lunar calendar has numerous impacts not only on the body and spirit of an individual Muslims but it has also great influence on their psyche and day to day affairs which eventually affects the sociology and anthropology of a nation. One-month long fasting is a vital pillar of Islam. It leads to unification of Muslims all over the world, creating a unified civilization based on unity of thought and action. The author makes a critical analysis of this holy practice of fasting in the month of Ramadan as a modern social element which may be utilized as an effective instrument for 'the globalization of Muslims', on the one hand, and meaningful inter-faith dialogue and international peace and harmony, on the other.

A Contemporary Burning Debate:

For the last couple of decades, common men are continuously coming across some new geo-political, economical and strategic terms, and the word 'globalization' is often used referring close economic relations among the nations; alleviation of trade barriers; expansion of corporate activities and ultimately, creation of a trans-nation world order. Philanthropists refer it towards the unification of all races, cultures, colors and languages, but ultimately this widely used term has multifarious

* Associate Professor (Islamic Law), Chairman Department of Distance Learning Sharia'h Academy, International Islamic University Islamabad Pakistan.

meaning, with millions of proponents as well as multi millions of mute opponents at the same time. Some, for unification of all nations, plead globalization as an instrument of economic globalization using the tools of deregulation of labor market, free trade and minimum barriers in the way of economic activities, the underlying cause of the theme is economy; some others refer it as cultural globalization making all human being into a single and uniformed way of life; and another corner of proponent implies it as political globalization meaning of which indicates a new colonial realm of some economically powerful nation-less people.

These schools of thought, no doubt, have solid and firm arguments upon which they build their thesis and disseminate their ideas through their sources. The author does not intend to get bogged by the agenda on board into this new discourse, as most of its quantum is not relevant to the main theme, however, it is not out of place that the proponents of the either types of globalization remained in search of some common grounds among the people; they explore common issues among them and try to make them harmonious, mainly---as they claim---for peace making process in a peaceful way.

Revival of a Focal Symbol of Unification of Mankind:

But all those shades¹ of globalization unfortunately, do not recognize the hard, bare and stark fact of the history and time---the insistence on religious identity of almost all the human being, though there is a negligible minority of the people does exist which does not believe in any religion. Taking the plea of this phenomenon, one can say that the efforts for the globalization, even if those are for peace and harmony, eventually lead to the economic well-being of the people on the

Earth, but in fact it is of another type ---economical--- war between the followers of Abel and the followers of Cain of the time.

In order to bring peace and harmony among the people the most appropriate way, according to the author, is acceptance of reality of the Earth--- the religion---then it will comparatively be easy to identify the focal point among the cultures and the existing religions and their denominations. Qura'n advises the Muslims; '*Say: O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you*²'... Fasting, besides many others things, is one of those common points which had been and can be experienced in almost all the existing religions and societies as well as in all parts of the world. Its study reveals that it has numerous angles and aspects in human life and history. In some parts of the world it remained a religious ritual, whereas some other societies take it as an act of moaning; some celebrate it as a rite of preparation; many others treat it as a ritual of initiation; in some tribal and ancient cultures it was taken as a magical tool; in either ways some use it as an act of penitence; anthropologists take it as an ascetic practice; and religious denominations take it as a divine blessing.

It does not mean that fasting is the only symbol of unification of mankind, but is a powerful and a solid socio- cultural and religious element. It has an ability to create a common culture and civilization by bringing almost all religious, cultural and even tribal communities at a common point in a peaceful and harmonious way. The author open heartedly pronounces that in order to initiate and maintain the process of peace for the betterment of humanity, there may be many other common grounds for the unification, and he hopes that someone else may be able to explore such other common grounds: '*Say: O People of the Book!*

*Come to common terms as between us and you*³". By recognizing the individual identity of nations this way bring peace, love and affection for the entire humanity and eradicate the new disguised form of imperialism-- the globalization.

Fasting: a Common Religious Practice:

The practice of fasting date back since Jews, the followers of the Prophet Moses, were accustomed with the fasting on the Day of Atonement, 10th of *Tishri*⁴. Bible says: "And he was there with the Lord for forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments"⁵.

The contemporary Christians view fasting as: "*We can see that because Moses was in the literal presence of the Lord, it was that presence that sustained him so he neither needed food nor water. This, of course, is an exceptional fast*"⁶. The Christians take this Biblical view as their Holy Book pronounces it in this way:

*"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterwards hungry. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, it is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God"*⁷.

Whereas Islam embraces all these viewpoints in a harmonious and logical way. The famous book of prophetic traditions, *Al Sahhīh*,

describes numerous other traditions regarding fasting by various communities of Madina'h, for instance the pagan, and by the Jews. The book narrates another prophetic tradition as under:

Ibn 'Abbās (Allah be pleased with both of them) reported that When the Prophet came to Medina he found the Jews kept fasting on the Day of *Āshūra'h*. When they (the Jews) were asked about it and they said: it is the day on which Allah granted victory to Moses and (his people) *Banī Israel* over the Pharaoh and we fast out of gratitude to Him. Upon this the Apostle of Allah ((S.A.W.)) said: we have a closer connection with Moses then you have, and he commanded to fast on this day⁸.

In this tradition the Prophet Muhammad, (S.A.W.), embracing an important value and ritual of the Jews of Madina'h, declared the fasting as a value of the Muslims. Similarly, another prophetic tradition of *Al Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim reveals the fact about fasting in a comparatively better way:

Abdullah b. 'Umar (Allah be pleased with them) reported that (the Arabs of) pre-Islamic days used to fast on the day of *Āshūra* and the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) observed it. The Muslims too (observed it) before fasting in *Ramaḍān* became obligatory. But when it (*Ramaḍān*) became obligatory, the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) said: '*Āshūra* in one of the days of Allah, so he who wishes to fast and he who wishes otherwise may abandon fasting on that day⁹.

Only to the extent of Makka'h fasting antedates the prophet hood of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.), as the pagans of Makka'h used to observe fasting¹⁰. A profound appraisal of both the above-referred and many other prophetic traditions shows that Islam is in a continuity of the message brought by the prophet Moses. Details may be seen in numerous books of prophetic traditions¹¹.

Fasting: a Domestic Religious Practice of Muslims:

Within the parlance of Islamic sciences, one may pronounce "the main purpose of fasting is to purify the heart and to concentrate on all its attention upon God,¹²" as Al-Ghazali writes in his book and the further adds:

If, however, the individual comprehends the real meaning of fasting and, through the observation of his own heart, ascertains its place and value in the journey on the road to the hereafter, he will not fail to find out where the welfare of his heart lies. This does not necessitate a continuous routine. For this reason it has been related that the Apostle was wont to fast until everyone thought that he never ate, and he used to eat until everyone thought that he never fasted¹³.

Al Ghazali and many other scholars of Islamic sciences rightly and wisely pronounced fasting as mostly an individual exercise, main purpose of which is to draw and maintain a close bond between man and his Creator. In support of his argument Al Ghazali asks "How can the jurisprudents approve the fasting of a person who confines himself to restraining the appetite of his stomach and the urge of his sexual instinct, but neglects these inward aspects of the fast; how can they say that his

fast is valid¹⁴.” In this strict sense, Al Ghazali and many more jurists, no doubt, mention the real essence of fasting, but it would not be out of place if one advises us that it is the domestic explanation of fasting taken by the Muslim jurists--- though it is the actual asset of the whole mankind. But in this contemporary age of dialogue we, the Muslims, invite the other religious, cultural, ethnic and even nomadic communities and denominations of all kinds to the common values of entire mankind.

An Anthropological and Cultural Phenomenon:

Fasting, with the difference of levels and degrees, more or less, had been a universal phenomenon almost in every part of the world, though commonly understood as a religious practice. In contemporary influx and heap of information and dissemination of knowledge at worldwide level an average person, no doubt, does not have an ability to abstract a refined form of conclusion. For that matter fasting, a human practice is normally known as sacred and pious activity particularly bracketed to Muslim community and to some extent it is known and recognized by the Christian religious community as well. In both the religious traditions, the practical form of this divine practice, however, is not identical to each other. Setting aside its symbolic form of protest in favor of demand of someone and against violations of various natures of political or religious rights, fasting, in the history, had been practiced almost in every part of the world and in every era of time.

In Hellenistic mystery religions, the gods often revealed their divine teachings in dreams and visions only after a fast that required the total devotion of the devotees. Among the pre-Columbian people of Peru, fasting was one of the requirements for penance after confession of sins before a priest¹⁵

In ancient Greece, where the native religion was opposed to the idea of acceptability to the gods of maceration of the body, this dualistic view leading to a true asceticism is found in Orphism and fasting had its place. Pythagoras also recommended frugality in diet and commended fasting. Those who went to the temple to pray for some days should not take food during this period of pray, the teaching as to abstinence from excessive bodily desires, gluttony, drunkenness is also continue by Plato at individual level. Some other colors of fasting, though in different ways, may also be seen in ancient Greek literature¹⁶..

Fasting was also a cultural practice, a magical experience, or a social need of the people of the ancient Latin America. Evidences of this phenomenon are available in their old literature, though its nomenclature seems to be entirely different as experienced by the Muslims or other religious denominations of our time. Along with "Fasting" in Encyclopedia Americana described, in detail, the historical facts regarding the common value of the whole humanity and very rightly notifies as under:

Fasting is a common element of initiation rites among such diverse peoples as the Algonkin, Ojibwa and Thompson Indians of North America, the Guarani of Brazil and the Mataco of the Gran Chaco, as well as on several Pacific Islands. In ancient time it was imposed on those admitted to the mystery cults of Isis, Attis and Mithra. Fasting at puberty is a widespread usage-for example, among Sioux boys and Chiriguano girls. Fasting is common among primitive peoples as preliminary to marriage- For example among the Teita of East Africa, the Macuai of Guyana, the

Tlingit of Alaska and the Santals of Bengal. Orthodox Jewish couples fast before the nuptial ceremony¹⁷.

The above-referred author further adds that "Fasting is almost everywhere as a prescribed rite or mourning. It is used, for instance, in the Andaman Islands, Fiji, Samoa, China and Korea and among many African peoples. Orthodox Jews abstain from food until after the interment¹⁸."

Fasting: a Tool of Human Faculty Development:

Irrespective of its religious characteristics fasting, in the known history, remained a magical tool or may be a social requirement of a particular community. Looking at its numerous uses in human life we find that most of the examples of fasting are characterized by self-discipline and abstinence from indulgence, more specifically saying for religious purposes, i.e. non-ascetic. Whereas in an ascetic religion like Buddhism,--which counts human body as an evil--- as a religious denomination, suggests that Monk must take only one item of meal, preferably, at mid-day, and also must fast on the days of the new and full moon. Here we find that in Buddhism, this form of fasting could hardly be regarded as a religious practice rather is a punishment to the evil---the body¹⁹.

Common Universal Terms of Humanity:

As earlier stated that in recent past there has been a great deal of debate regarding globalization relying mostly on the visible aspects of communication technology. Human, because of vast communications and information network, of course, are well interconnected more than ever before. But does this flow of information go in right direction, beneficial for the mankind as a whole? Will this kind of globalization really unite the mankind or will be a tool of disintegration of societal set up of cultures and civilizations? Is this process of globalization for the

unification of mankind or a disguised form of cultural and economic imperialism?

These are some of the questions need to be addressed by the social scientists, but the author views this globalization---if it is globalization---as an increased information network which, in one way, well links the people of the globe with each other but in another way globalization is having numerous negative impacts on the unification of human being. Ms. Ailsa a Ukrainian lady, for instance, is well connected to her cyber friends throughout the world, she enjoys chat twice a day with them but at the same time is not aware of the problems faced by her brother and his family, her next door neighbor. The readers may visualize many such illustrious examples which convey us the fact that the people, by technological means, pretty knows immediately what happens in Burma, what is the graphic trend into the Asian stock exchange markets, but they are totally ignorant of their neighborhood even after weeks.

This kind of globalization has multiple consequences, dilemma of which is very obvious. Since it did not and does not accommodate the values and common heritage of the whole humanity and since it is a disguised form of a cultural and economic imperialism, its antithesis seems to be an inevitability of the time viz. in very next future. Apparently it is, no doubt, growing day by day but as a result of its prospective and natural outcome---its synthesis---the author does hope that such globalization will definitely create a vacuum for another concept of another globalization which may be a common and precious asset of the whole mankind. In order to initiate the process of this new form of globalization we the Muslims, the custodian of the Prophet Muhammad's last message owe the mankind and therefore must give an awakening call

to the humanity. The Divine Book, in this regard, advises us: "*Say: O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you*²⁰".....

This Divine commandment is with regard to the People of the Book--- the Jews and the Christians---whereas the verse itself elaborates the common terms as "*That we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, lords and patrons other than Allah*²¹".

From this verse of the Holy Qur'an a golden principle is derived that dialogue, *inter alia*, is initiated on common terms, and for that matter the Qur'an proposes some basic terms which are common among the people of the Book and the Muslims. The Qur'an has implied details of it and leaving its explanation to the wisdom of its readers, teaches the Muslims that dialogue is a harmonious way of settling down the issues with other communities. It teaches us that the best way of dialogue is digging out the common terms among the parties of dialogue which, no doubt, creates a soft corner in the heart of parties of dialogue and eventually facilitates them.

All the groups in favor of globalization claim themselves to be the activists for the peace and harmony in the world, but contrary to their claim the tools and gadgetries for the target to be achieved do not reflect concurrence between their theme and methodology. Taking the privilege of this precious Divine principle, the author would like to draw the attention of proponents and opponents of globalization to the fact that besides many other common terms among the people of the globe, fasting is as old value as humanity itself is; and therefore, we the Muslim invite you to the common terms; this calls beckons to the proponents as well as the opponents of globalization!

Revival of Fasting as an Old Common Value of Entire Humanity

The author has described earlier, in detail, that fasting is a unique value of whole of the humanity which the mankind experienced in every part of the world and in every time span of the history; it is well known to every religious denomination---culturally from the pagans of the Arabian peninsula to the Buddhist Monks of the far East; religiously from the followers of the Prophet Moses to the Muslims of the time, and is well known and recognized by the Christian religious community as well; historically from north pole of the globe in Hellenistic mystery religions to south pole among the pre-Columbian people of Peru²². Obviously, for that matter the people of these regions very easily accepted the religious dogmas of Christianity.

It was practiced in ancient Greece, the predecessor of the contemporary Western civilization, where the native religion was opposed to the idea of acceptableness to the gods of maceration of the body, this dualistic view leading to a true asceticism is found in Orphism, fasting had its place. Pythagoras also recommended frugality in diet and commended fasting. Those who went to the temple to pray for some days should not take food during this period of pray, the teaching as to abstinence from excessive bodily desires, gluttony, drunkenness is also held by Plato at individual level²³.

It remained a common element of initiation rites among such diverse peoples as the Algonkin, Ojibwa and Thompson Indians of North America, the Guarani of Brazil and the Mataco of the Gran Chaco, as well as on several Pacific Islands. In ancient time it was imposed on those admitted to the mystery cults of Isis, Attis and Mithra. Fasting at puberty is a widespread usage-for example, among Sioux boys and Chiriguano

girls. Fasting is common among primitive peoples as a preliminary to marriage- for example among the Teita of East Africa, the Macuai of Guyana, the Tlingit of Alaska and the Santals of Bengal. Orthodox Jewish couples fast before the nuptial ceremony. It is almost everywhere a prescribed rite or mourning. It is used in the Andaman Islands, Fiji, Samoa, China and Korea and among many African peoples. Orthodox Jews abstain from food until after the interment²⁴."

Fasting a Common Heritage of Mankind:

The author does hope that the abstracts regarding fasting, provided in this discourse, are self-evident in proving its universality, and therefore it is, no doubt, acceptable to all religious, cultural as well as geographical denominations of the globe. It is, besides many others, a common and acceptable term and revival of which will definitely prove an ability to create the process of unification of mankind again. Let us take an example of Muslims.

The holy month of *Ramadan*, in lunar Islamic calendar, has numerous impacts not only on the body and spirit of an individual Muslims but it has great influence on their psyche and day to day affairs which eventually affects the sociology and anthropology of a nation. *Ramadan*, being a vital pillar of Islam, without compromising on the objectives of *Sharia'h*, endorses the hallmarks of Islam in all parts of the world. The colors and shades of this civilization may appear in numbers but their fulcrum and hub remains the same. The Muslims of sub-continent, for instance, at their *iftār*, have a dish made of flour of grams mixed with spicy ingredients whereas in Morocco, the favorite dish for *iftar* is a cup of hot soup of pigeon. This pillar, with the help of other pillars, creates a beautiful bouquet of *īdāra'h Islāmīa*²⁵.

Coincidentally, the Muslims preserved this religious activity and created numerous beautiful colors of their civilization very effectively, whereas, the other religious communities don't. It doesn't mean that others have changed or abrogated their religious teachings, but it carries multiple reasons needs no explanation. The famous Christian site Bible.com very rightly 'confesses': *The key of fasting has nearly been lost to the modern church. It is also one that some say was only for early day Christians. Looking closely at the Word of God, we find that The Lord never did away with the principle of fasting, but it has been man who has attempted to make it obsolete. Fasting is still a valid key that can be used today to bring us into kingdom living*²⁶. What does this passage convey? Whatever it is to the Christians! We the Muslims pronounce and second forcefully the statement made by Christians colleagues: '*the Lord never did away with the principle of fasting, but it has been man who has attempted to make it obsolete*'.

O People of the Book [Earth]! Come to Common Terms....:

*The Lord never did away with the principle of fasting, but it has been man who has attempted to make it obsolete*²⁷. That is why fasting does not reflect in any corner of our international agencies' activities, specifically saying in the annual calendar of the UN. In order to signify its interest and commitment the United Nations, on various occasions, has established its calendar of days and weeks and the organization asks its member states and sister agencies to declare these days and weeks in ways which reveal their priorities. Sometimes the promotion of a specific day is led by an agency of the UN, for example, the World Health Organization leads World Health Day and World Tobacco Day. Some UN agencies also have their own international days, for instance, WHO's

World TB Day or UNESCO's World Philosophy Day established and promoted by the agency but not designated by the UN General Assembly for the full UN system²⁸. No matter how many days and weeks are at the official calendar of the other---excluding the UN--- agencies just the UN itself have its own official calendar consisting of four weeks and 65 days to be celebrated. The organization hopes that these days and weeks be celebrated by the member states at official level. A brief summary of these weeks and days may be seen in the following lines.

Weeks to be celebrated by the Member States and UN Agencies:

1. Week of solidarity with the people struggling against racism and racial discrimination from 21-28 March;
2. Week of solidarity with the peoples of non-self-government territories from 25 May to 1st June;
3. World space week from 4-10 October; and
4. Disarmament week from 24-30 October.

Days to be celebrated by the Member States and UN Agencies:

The UN official calendar also suggests its member states and allied agencies 62 days to be celebrated in relation to 65 different occasions; full details of these days may be seen at their official site referred above, however, some of the examples to explain the thesis on board are: World Day of Social Justice; International Mother Language Day; International Women's Day; World Water Day; World Health Day; International Day of Families; World No-Tobacco Day; World Refugee Day; International Day of Peace; and Human Rights Day.

International Week of Fasting for a Modern Social Order:

The UN, on 17 October, celebrates the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty every year since 1993, when the General Assembly, by a resolution designated this day to promote awareness of

the need to eradicate poverty and destitution in all countries, particularly in developing countries - a need that has become a development priority. The world leaders committed themselves to cutting by half by the year 2015 the number of people living in extreme poverty - people whose income is less than one dollar a day²⁹. But what happens in the name of poverty in the influential corridors of the nations? Seminars, symposia, conferences and activities like this followed by lavish lunch or dinner consist of numerous dishes which take millions of their annual budget but poverty, on the other hand, is going to be increased day by day.

The meaning of poverty cannot come into reality unless one encounters hunger. Hunger without uttering a single word teaches human body the spirit of poverty. Fasting, besides other, is an effective religious, anthropological and cultural tool which communicates the people in whose life no real concept of hunger is there. Therefore, celebration of poverty day by days is bracketed with fasting will not only create awareness about the poverty but will also initiate the process of unification of mankind in a peaceful way. And this noble objective can not be achieved only by celebrating the bare poverty day. Keeping in view the foregoing discussion the author proposes that we the follower of the last Messenger must propose the UN to switch over one of its weeks into another more wise and more logical form by which the religious and cultural communities of the world may be able not only to accept it but they may realize that it has an ability to generate harmony among the people; another way for the cause of globalization by celebrating International Week of Fasting.

The detail of proposed International Week of Fasting may subsequently be materialized by the statesmen of various religious and

cultural communities at another forum, but off on the hand the author can visualize that hopefully it will be acceptable to all corners of life and to the entire communities of the world if the academic circle of this prestigious forum consider it as a useful idea. It is hoped that the process of unification of mankind will take its momentum in a better way as compared to that of current concept of globalization--- in real sense imperialism. And this way will prove itself in to a new phase of modern social order or a new form of globalization---a real form.

Epilogue:

It would, of course, be extremism if one claims that fasting is the only or chief instrument by which the different cultures, religions, civilizations or communities can be brought at a central point. However, on the other hand, it can hardly be denied that this unique piece of human assets' repository has an ability to create a new civilization for the mankind, though its colors and shades, like Islamic civilization, will be of different nature and scheme, its hub and fulcrum, yet, will remain the same---the peaceful process of unification of entire humanity. The author hopes that this process will be an initiative which would have an ability to speed up the process of inter faith dialogue among the various dogmas of the Earth.

And this is a new proposed architectural view and form of globalization which will be one of the others effective, useful and powerful 'common terms' of peace, love, affection and harmony for the entire mankind; a common term on the basis of acceptability, tolerance, mutual understanding and a better futuristic vision accommodating our coming generations. [We] Say: *O People of the Book [Earth]! Come to common terms as between us and you*³⁰. And fasting is still a common

term among the people of the Earth as Bible.com says: *Fasting is still a valid key that can be used today to bring us into kingdom living*³¹---a new birth of globalization.

End Notes:

¹ The term globalization, to its opponents, refers to a new form of colonist system and imperialism to establish a new economic model which may have an ability to control the economic resources and political hierarchy of all the nations of the world.

² *The Holy Qur'an* 3:64, Translation and Commentary by Abdullah Yusuf Ali.

³ *The Holy Qur'an* 3:64, Translation and Commentary by Abdullah Yusuf Ali.

⁴ 7th month of Jewish calendar.

⁵ *Exodus* 34:28-29

⁶ http://www.bible.com/bibleanswers_result.php?id=179

⁷ *Matthew* 4:1-4,

⁸ Muslim, *Sahih*, Dar el Fiker, Lebanon, 1993, *Hadith* No. 1130

⁹ *ibid*, *Hadith* No. 1126.

¹⁰ See the chapter about fasting in books of prophetic traditions.

¹¹ See the chapter about fasting in these books.

¹² Faris, Nabib Amin *The Mysteries of Fasting*, being a translation with notes of the *Kitab Asrar al Sawm* of Al-Gazzal's *Ihya Ulum al-Din*, Lahore, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1979, pp.49.

¹³ *Ibid*, pp. 49-50.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, pp.37.

¹⁵ *The new Encyclopedia of Britannica*, the University of Chicago, 1985, Vol. 4, *Fasting*, pp. 692.

¹⁶ *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1960, Vol. 5, *Fasting*, pp.764.

¹⁷ *Encyclopedia Americana*, Grolier Incorporated, Danbury, Connecticut, 1986, Vol.11, *Fasting*, pp.42.

¹⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁹ For details, see *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1960, Vol. 5, *Fasting*

²⁰ *The Holy Qur'an* 3:64, Translation and Commentary by Abdullah Yusuf Ali.

²¹ *Ibid*.

²² The historical description of fasting has already been elaborated.

²³ *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1960, Vol. 5, *Fasting*, pp.764.

²⁴ *Encyclopedia Americana*, Grolier Incorporated, Danbury, Connecticut, 1986, Vol.11, *Fasting*, pp.42.

²⁵ Islamic civilization.

²⁶ http://www.bible.com/bibleanswers_result.php?id=179

²⁷ *Ibid*.

²⁸ http://www.unac.org/en/news_events/un_days/international_days.asp and UN's Conferences and Events

²⁹ <http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/poverty/>

³⁰ *The HolyQura'n* 3:64, Translation and Commentary by Abdullah Yusuf Ali.

³¹ http://www.bible.com/bibleanswers_resulta.php?id=179